

Intersections between Child Welfare & Homeless Systems: Results from 2 Research Studies

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Intersection of CW & Homelessness in NYC – 2 Dimensions:

■ #1 - CW history (as children) among young adults in shelters

JM Park, S Metraux & DP Culhane (2005). "Childhood out-of-home placement and dynamics of public shelter utilization among young homeless adults." *Children & Youth Services Review* 27:533-546

■ #2 - Shelter use (as adults) among people who were in the CW system (as children)

JM Park, S Metraux, G Brodbar & DP Culhane (2004). "Public shelter admission among young adults with child welfare histories by type of service and type of exit." *Social Service Review* 78(2)

Data

- NYC Administration of Childrens Services (ACS)
 - Administrative records on children receiving foster care or preventive services
 - 1981-2000
- NYC Department of Homeless Services (DHS)
 - Administrative records on families and individuals using public shelters
 - 1987-2000

(records matched based on common identifiers)

#1 - CW history (as children) among young adults in shelters

- What proportion of homeless adults had out-of-home placements as children?
 - (previous literature indicates between 9% & 39%)
- Does this CW experience impact the length or frequency of homelessness episodes?

Table 2

Prevalence of childhood histories of out-of-home placement or non-placement preventive services among young homeless adults in the New York City shelter system

	Family shelter system (N=7698)		Single-adult shelter system (N=3703)	
	Out-of-home care (%)	Out-of-home care or preventive service (%)	Out-of-home care (%)	Out-of-home care or preventive service (%)
Race/Ethnicity***				
Black	25	33	23	29
Hispanic	16	24	17	24
Other	20	28	10	12
Sex***				
Female	22	30	27	34
Male	11	20	17	22
Age at first shelter entry***				
20 or younger	27	37	25	31
21–24	16	22	17	22
Total	22	30	20	26

*** $p < 0.001$.

Adults in study groups (i.e., shelter populations) were all under age 25

CW History and Shelter Use

- Childhood out-of-home placement was associated with
 - an increased number of days spent in shelters among family shelter users
 - an increased likelihood of experiencing repeated shelter stays in both the family shelter and single-adult shelter groups.
- Those exiting out-of-home care directly into adulthood stayed in shelters longer

#2 - Shelter Use Among Young Adults with CW System History

- This study examines:
 - the prevalence of shelter use among 11,958 adults who as older children (age 16+) left the CW system;
 - Differential risks for shelter use among:
 - children who were placed in out-of-home care vs. those who received preventive services;
 - those who exited the CW system into “independent living” vs. other placement types

RATES OF DHS SHELTER USE BY SELECTED CHARACTERISTICS

	Either Shelter System* (%)	Family Shelter System (%)	Single Adult Shelter System (%)
History of out-of-home care:			
Yes	22.4	17.0	8.9
No	10.8	9.4	2.5
Type of final exit from ACS:			
Reunification	19.4	14.7	7.6
Independent living	25.6	18.8	10.7
Abscending from care	33.6	22.4	15.6
Preventive services	12.4	11.0	3.0
Race and ethnicity:			
African American (non-Hispanic)	24.3	18.8	8.9
Hispanic	14.1	11.0	5.2
Caucasian (non-Hispanic)	6.0	4.0	3.0
Gender:			
Female	25.1	23.7	4.8
Male	11.1	3.8	9.3
Total	18.7	14.5	6.9

Risk Factors for Shelter Use

- Childhood Out of Home Placement
- Absconding from Placement
- Exit from Child Welfare System at Older Age
- African-American or Hispanic
- Female

Key Points:

- Out-of-home care contributes to a high risk of shelter use as an adult.
- Gender is associated with different dynamics of shelter use.
- Transition to adulthood appears to pose a key intervention point for housing and supportive services, especially among women in this risk group with children.

Conclusions

- A large overlap exists between CW and homeless services
- Transition to adulthood:
 - reflects transition between systems
 - can be an intervention point where housing with support services replaces need for subsequent homeless services (and associated human and public costs)